



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
P.O. Box 42560 • Olympia, Washington 98504-2560 • (360) 902-1800

Dear WSDA Certified Organic Processor, Handler, Brokerage Company, or Retailer:

Welcome to the 2006 certification year! **PLEASE READ THIS LETTER:** It contains useful information about your 2006 renewal forms and how to complete them in a manner that is both time sensitive for you and allows us to verify your operation's compliance with National Organic Standards.

PLEASE NOTE: Applications postmarked after March 1 will be charged a late fee of \$75.

As you may have noticed, this year's renewal is much smaller than the packet you received in 2005. Last year, all WSDA certified operations were asked to complete a full Organic System Plan to ensure our files accurately reflect your current practices in regards to organic products. Due to the detailed information we received from you last year, the 2006 application is simply an update to the paperwork you submitted in 2005.

This letter will address several questions we consistently received from certified organic operations during 2005 and questions you may have upon receipt of your 2006 renewal application.

- Why do we ask the questions we ask?
- What happens if I don't renew my certification?
- Are these forms available on-line?
- Do I need to notify WSDA if my organic system plan changes during the year?
- How do I add a new product to my certification?
- Where is the Cost Share Application?
- Who do I contact at the Organic Food Program with questions specific to my operation?

We hope that this will clarify our expectations and help facilitate this year's certification process.

WHY DO WE ASK THE QUESTIONS WE ASK?

A common question from applications is why we do we require the information asked on the forms and how do these questions pertain to your organic certification. The questions contained in your application packets are asked for several primary reasons:

- To demonstrate compliance of your operation with National Organic Standards;
- To provide information adequate to facilitate an on-site audit to be conducted at the time of your annual inspection; and,
- To demonstrate compliance of the WSDA Organic Food Program with the accreditation requirements of the National Organic Program, ISO Guide 65 (International Organization for Accreditation), and IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements).

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT RENEW MY CERTIFICATION?

Your organic certification continues to be effective until you withdraw from the organic certification program or WSDA suspends or revokes your organic certification. **If you do not intend to renew your organic certification please contact WSDA by phone, email, letter or fax and state that you would like to withdraw from the program.**

In early April 2006, WSDA will identify the certified organic operations that have not renewed or withdrawn from certification. Notices of Noncompliance will be issued to all operations that have not renewed or withdrawn. If we do not receive a

response to the Notice of Noncompliance, a Notice of Proposed Suspension will be issued. If there is no response to the Notice of Proposed Suspension, the operation will be suspended from the National Organic Certification Program.

ARE APPLICATION FORMS AVAILABLE ON-LINE?

Yes. Copies of all application forms can be found at the WSDA Organic Food Program Website: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Organic/default.htm>. Forms are available in both PDF and word format. Forms in word format may be saved and filled out electronically. **If you complete the forms electronically you will need to print the forms and mail them to the Olympia office.** We do not have the capacity to accept electronic applications at this time but we hope to have that capacity in the future. Please direct any questions you may have pertaining to the WSDA Organic Food Program website to Jennifer Watson at (360) 902-1885 or email: jwatson@agr.wa.gov.

DO I NEED TO NOTIFY WSDA IF MY ORGANIC SYSTEM PLAN CHANGES DURING THE YEAR?

Your Organic System Plan should describe your plans for handling or processing organic products. It is understood that environmental, economic, and other reasons can cause you to modify this plan as the year goes on. The National Organic Program requires that certified operations notify their certifying agent *prior* to making any changes that could affect the integrity of organic products.

The following are some examples of situations that would require you to notify the WSDA Organic Program:

- Contamination of an organic ingredient or product with a prohibited material.
- Make a change to the types of inputs used at your operation (cleaning/sanitation of food contact surfaces, post harvest materials, processing aids, pest control substances, boiler water additives, etc.).
- Add a new line or type of processing to your organic certification (NOTE: An inspection may be required prior to certification).
- Move your facility to a new location.
- Utilize a new label for your organic products.
- Sell, label, or represent a new product as "organic".
- Change any portion of a certified operation that may affect your compliance with the National Organic Standards.

You can notify WSDA of changes by letter, email, or fax:

WSDA Organic Food Program
PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
Email: organic@agr.wa.gov
FAX (360) 902-2087.

HOW DO I ADD A NEW PRODUCT TO MY CERTIFICATION?

A certified Handler or Processor may add a new product to their certificate anytime throughout the year. The following items must be submitted and approved by the WSDA Organic Program *prior* to the addition of a new product to a certificate:

Handlers: A copy of the organic certificate and the label for all new organic products must be submitted and approved in order for the product to be added to your organic certificate.

Processors: A product formulation, label, organic certificates for all organic ingredients, and information regarding any non-organic ingredient or processing aid, must be submitted and approved in order for the new product to be added to your organic certificate. Please refer to the "Instructions for Certification of New Organic Products" included in your renewal application.

Note that the process to add a new product to your certificate may take several weeks.

WHERE IS THE COST SHARE APPLICATION?

The National Organic Certification Cost Share Program offsets 75% of the organic certification fees up to a maximum of \$500 per year to organic producers, processors and handlers. WSDA has been providing this cost share program to

Washington farms and businesses since 2003. Since 2003 we have provided over \$500,000 to certified organic operations to offset the cost of certification.

The funding for the program is running out. USDA has stated that additional funding for the program is not available. Additional funding for the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program has not been appropriated in the 2006 Federal Agricultural budget. We estimate that there will be \$70,000 in available funds in 2006 for the cost share program. WSDA is developing an equitable method for distributing the remaining organic certification cost share money. Application forms for the 2006 Organic Certification Cost Share Program will be sent in January 2006.

WHO DO I CONTACT AT THE ORGANIC FOOD PROGRAM WITH QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO MY OPERATION?

The WSDA Organic Food Program staff bring unique backgrounds and areas of special interest that, together, form a well-rounded staff that is able to answer most questions you might have about your organic certification. The following is a list of Organic Food Program office staff, their contact information, and descriptions of their areas of specialty. Please use this list to determine who will be best able to answer any questions that may arise during the next year:

Miles McEvoy: Organic Program Manager, Olympia, (360) 902-1924, mmcevoy@agr.wa.gov. Contact Miles with questions pertaining to program development, feedback on customer service, the Organic Advisory Board, the National Organic Standards Board, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements and to report complaints concerning violations of organic standards.

Les Eklund: Organic Field Supervisor, Olympia, (360) 902-1981, leklund@agr.wa.gov. Contact Les with questions pertaining to when to expect your organic food inspection or with feedback on your annual organic food inspections.

Brenda Book: Handler/Processor Certification Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-2090, bbook@agr.wa.gov. Contact Brenda with questions pertaining to labeling organic products, handler/processor certification, handler/processor EOVP certification, and export documentation needs.

Richard Carr: Organic Certification Specialist, Olympia, (360) 725-5492, rcarr@agr.wa.gov. Contact Richard with questions pertaining to producer certification in Western Washington and bakery certification, coffee roaster certification, and livestock related processing.

Katherine Withey: Livestock Certification Specialist/Materials Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1882, kwithey@agr.wa.gov. Contact Katherine with questions pertaining to livestock certification and material registration.

Rachael Jamison: Producer Certification Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1951, rjamison@agr.wa.gov. Contact Rachael with questions pertaining to producer certification in Central and Eastern Washington, producer EOVP certification, and issues related to the Quarterly Report.

Jennifer Watson: Organic Fee Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1885, jwatson@agr.wa.gov. Contact Jennifer with questions about your organic certification fees, the Organic Cost Share Program, refunds, and setting up payment plans.

Christa Bemis: Customer Service Specialist, Olympia, (360) 902-1805, cbemis@agr.wa.gov. Contact Christa with requests for copies of application forms as well as copies of forms that you submitted.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to create an organic certification program that meets both your needs and the requirements of the National Organic Program!

Sincerely,

The WSDA Organic Food Program Staff